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TAGS: [PINR](#) [EPET](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: MINISTRY OF OIL "PURGE" ON HOLD FOR NOW

REF: BAGHDAD 978

Classified By: ECON M/C Tom Delare, reasons 1.4 b/d

¶1. (C) Summary: On March 25, ECON Minister Counselor expressed concern to Minister of Oil Heshem al-Hashimi (Fadhila party) that his Ministry was being purged of experienced top-level technocrats on sectarian grounds (i.e. being Sunnis). We were unhappy when Hashimi responded that he would not block "De-Baathification" of the Ministry. On March 28, when we expressed our concerns to Deputy Prime-Minister Chalabi, he told us that he "stopped this" and that he had instructed Hashimi not to take action on De-Baathification. We have found out that there are six names for dismissal on the letter from the De-Baathification Committee to the Ministry of Oil and that 5 of the 6 currently are working with the sixth person on leave. End Summary.

¶2. (C) The Minister of Oil told us that the De-Baathification Committee had send previous Minister of Oil Bahr al-Ulum a list with 6 names requiring their removal. Hashimi said while that the previous Minister had delayed action on the names, he believed that he could not ignore the letter. Hashimi told us that those on the list would be offered early retirement rather than being fired and that to date, none had been fired. Hashimi reminded us that the De-Baathification Committee was a CPA creation with legal authority and that as Minister he had no authority to refuse to follow its instructions (reftel for more on recent De-Baathification problems). Hashimi did not tell us which Ministry officials were on the list.

¶3. (C) Hashimi acknowledged other rumors swirling about the Ministry of Oil (MoO). He told us that he had been criticized (presumably from within the Shia coalition) for not requiring that women veil themselves at the Ministry. He stressed that the MoO has an open-door employment policy and that people were being hired for the Ministry on the basis of their qualifications to do technical work and not for their party or sectarian affiliation.

¶4. (C) Hashimi has also been ridiculed as Minister of Oil because he is also the current Minister of Tourism. (Commentators have suggested a Minister of Tourism could not be a Minister of Oil and that Hashimi got the job because of his political/sectarian connections to the Fadhila party). In response to this, we invited Hashimi to talk about himself. He told us that he started electrical engineering studies at the university but he left to join the Iraqi Air Force. He had started off in the "standards and control" office but he had quickly worked his way up to Brigadier General rank in the Air Force where he was achieved a high ranking position as its Director General for Administration. While in the Air Force, he also received a B.S. in computer science. Hashimi made no claim of any knowledge, background or experience in the oil sector.

Chalabi: A Ministry in Freefall

(5. (C) In a subsequent weekly energy meeting March 28, co-chaired by the Ambassador and DPM Chalabi, we expressed concern over Hashimi's apparent willingness to allow his ministry to be purged. Chalabi told us that he had stopped this⁸ and had instructed Hashimi not to take any action. On a related subject, namely the recent dismissal of State Oil Marketing Organization (SOMO) Director General (DG) al-Dujayli (reftel), Chalabi said that the matter was out of his hands, as PM Ja,fari is inhibited from any reaction by his need for Fadhila Party votes. Chalabi,s overall evaluation was somber: &the ministry is in freefall.⁸

¶6. (C) There are six names in the De-Bathification letter: Radwan al-Saadi, DG for Economics and Finance, Samir Michael, DG of the Technical Directorate, Dathar Khashab, DG of the Daura Refinery, Yasseen Suleiman, Head of the Legal Department, and Talib al-Zubaydi. All are currently employed. Sharif Muhsin, former Director General of the Auditing Department under Saddam, has been put on leave because he was a high level (&firqa⁸) member of the Ba'th Party.

KHALILZAD